

LETTERS THE VILLAGE VOICE DIDN'T PRINT

Several letters of response were sent to the VILLAGE VOICE following the Borman article. Among them were letters of support for Steinem from Bella Abzug and Jane Alpert and a joint letter signed by Michele Wallace, Letty Cotton Pogrebin, Robin Morgan, Vivian Gornick, Andrea Dworkin, Phyllis Chesler, Charlotte Bunch and Susan Brownmiller, all of which appeared in the June 4 VOICE along with a response from Nancy Borman, author of the "Random Action" article. Borman's reply points out that "None of you Steinem apologists mention your various entanglements with MS. magazine, where two of you are editors, others are contributors, and lots of luck with your new column, Bella." Among letters supporting the publication of the Borman article which we know of that the VOICE did not print were those from Pat Barry and Jane Barry, James Forman (former executive director of SNCC) and Rosalyn Baxandall. Redstockings also sent a letter which went unprinted asking the VOICE to print its address since the article mentioned that people could get the censored material from them, then gave no address. Below are three letters.

To the editor, Village Voice:

Gloria Steinem's associates and supporters not only ignore the facts about her connections with the CIA, but play tricks with arithmetic as well. Bella Abzug and Jane Alpert contend first that Steinem did nothing, and then that the nothing she did happened 19 or 20 years ago anyway. The public record contradicts them.

On the "nothing" Steinem did: while investigating the Redstockings' charges against Steinem, we came across a New York Times article of 4 July 1959 entitled "Youths Briefed on Red Festival: Co-Directors of Group Here Pose as Foreign Students Who Criticize the U.S." It describes how Steinem's Independent Research Service colleague Leonard Bechick and Steinem herself (impersonating "Mohini, an Indian girl" coached American students on how to answer questions from foreign students about political issues, including segregation. The article quotes from this role-playing session:

"Miss Steinem, as Mohini, raised the question of segregation and 'your Governor Faubus (of Arkansas) calling out the constabulary to enforce it.'

"The Chicago girl acknowledged the problems of discrimination in the United States, but she added:

"'Mohini, as an indian surely you understand the difficulties. After all, in your country you have had and still have the caste system of segregation. You know how long it will take to eliminate that.'"

Even 20 years ago, in 1959, some people in this country were fighting segregation while Steinem was using secret CIA funds to teach people to defend it. In 1967--12 years ago--Steinem had moved on to a defense of the CIA. In a Washington Post article of 18 February 1967 ("Work of CIA With Youths at Festival Is Defended"), Steinem rationalizes the activities of the Independent Research Service by saying that "They [the CIA] wanted to do what we wanted to do--present a healthy, diverse view of the United States." She was still holding this line in 1975, and that's only four years ago. Her "lengthy and detailed response", in a letter to the "Sisters of the Feminist Press," asserted that "for better or worse, I have always been my own person...And as far as I know, each one of us would have acted in the same individualistic way if there had been not one penny of Government money involved."

Maybe Steinem helped people make up excuses for segregation because the government paid her to: or maybe she personally believed that segregation could be defensible. Maybe she felt in 1967, and still feels today, that CIA collaboration is not a serious matter. In her 1975 letter to the feminist press, Steinem for the first time criticized the secrecy that surrounded her work for the CIA, but not the kind of work she was doing for it. We found in the letter no repudiation of her 1959 defense of segregation (well into the era of the civil rights movement), or of her 1967 defense of the CIA (at the height of the Vietnam War).

This alone gives Redstockings and the feminist movement the right to ask where Steinem's real loyalties are today.

— Jane Barry
Pat Barry

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SATURDAY, JULY 4, 1959.

YOUTHS BRIEFED ON RED FESTIVAL

Co-Directors of Group Here
Pose as Foreign Students
Who Criticize the U.S.

By PHILIP BENJAMIN

Mohini, an Indian girl, and Kofi a Ghanaian, sat in a Vienna wine garden and asked Gary, an American student, searching and sometimes ill-informed questions about the United States.

"Why does your Government denounce the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolt when it has itself sent troops to Lebanon and interfered in Guatemala?" Mohini asked.

"You want the friendship of Africa, yet you practice race suppression in your own country," Kofi said.

Actually, "Mohini" was Gloria Steinem and "Kofi" was Leonard Bebhick, and the place was not a Vienna wine garden but a room in the Carnegie Endowment building in New York.

Advisory Service Set Up

Mr. Bebhick, a 26-year-old lawyer of New Bedford, Mass., and Miss Steinem, 25, a writer

from Chevy Chase, Md., are co-directors of the Independent Service for Information on the Vienna Youth Festival.

The service was set up by Mr. Bebhick and Miss Steinem last October at Cambridge, Mass., to brief American youths who may attend the Vienna Youth Festival. The festival is Communist-directed and youth and student groups from most non-Communist countries have refused to take part in the gathering, which will run from July 26 to Aug. 4.

"But with thousands of American students in Europe this summer, it's a good bet that a lot of them will naturally show up at the festival," Mr. Bebhick said yesterday.

"We want to make sure that those who do go know what they're getting into," he added. "So we organized this service with financial help from business men and lawyers. We hold orientation sessions and show films of previous youth festivals."

It was reported last March that the United States Government was quietly and unofficially encouraging able American youths to attend the festival, and that persons inquiring about the festival were being referred to the Independent Service.

At the session yesterday Mr. Bebhick and Miss Steinem first were Kofi and Mohini. Then they were Mohammed, a Tunisian, and Annette, a French girl.

Gary Weissman, 21 years old, of St. Louis, a senior at the University of Wisconsin, acquitted himself well under pressure from "Kofi" and "Mohini." He was armed with facts—supplied in a booklet by the service—on segregation. He agreed that United States intervention in Lebanon was open to question, "although you must remember that Lebanon asked us for troops."

American Problems Aired

Mr. Bebhick then became Mohammed, the Tunisian, and asked a girl from Chicago about the "materialism" of the United States. "I hear that all anyone wants is a Cadillac," Mohammed-Bebhick said.

"Well," the girl replied, "my family is far more interested in music and art, for example, than in owning a Cadillac. We don't own a Cadillac."

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"Mohini, as an Indian surely you understand the difficulties. After all, in your country you have had and still have the caste system of segregation. You know how long it will take to eliminate that."

Mr. Bebhick said he and Miss Steinem would have an office in Vienna during the festival.

Dear Editor:

The Village Voice is to be highly commended for publishing Nancy Borman's article about the censorship of the Random House edition of Redstockings' Feminist Revolution in its May 21, 1979 issue. The liberation of women is a vital issue in every country of the world. Efforts by anyone to stifle the full emancipation of women have to be countered and defeated. As an organization, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is not interested in the liberation of women. To widen the debate on who is working with or not working with the CIA is an important contribution.

As a consistent reader of the Village Voice I found aspects of some of the letters in the June 4, 1979 issue contradictory. Jane Alpert, who was well known in the radical movement throughout the world and who turned herself in to the police, acknowledged that Gloria Steinem did work with the CIA. She objected to the Village Voice publishing the article on the grounds that, after all, Gloria Steinem admitted that she worked for the CIA some fifteen years ago and the rest of us should forget it and let bygones be bygones. However, the former Congresswoman from New York, Bella Abzug, maintains that Gloria Steinem never worked with the Central Intelligence Agency. The readers of the Village Voice should explore the discrepancy between the position of Bella Abzug and Jane Alpert. In this manner the readers of the Village Voice can better determine for ourselves whether Redstockings is correct in asserting that Gloria Steinem is hurting the liberation of women through past or current involvement with the CIA.

Finally, Michelle Wallace, Robin Morgan, Susan Brownmiller and others raise the question of the original Redstockings and the audacity of the Voice in printing Nancy Borman's article. The readers of the Village Voice also need more clarification on what was the political line and social practice of the original Redstockings and what is the basis of the current split between Michelle Wallace and Robin Morgan, on the one hand, and Kathie Sarachild, the editor of Feminist Revolution and Redstockings, on the other.

I hope the Voice will not relinquish its quest to inform about the true nature of the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA has wrought untold harm to the people of the world. For instance, it has unleashed Operation Chaos in the United States of America, a program with the objectives of making it impossible for any protest group or groups of people to consolidate (See the Rockefeller Commission's Report, 1975). The women's liberation movement is not exempt from the disruptive tactics of the CIA.

Sincerely,
James Forman, Chairman, History Project
Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee

Dear People,

Congratulations for daring to publish the story behind the censorship of the Redstockings book, Feminist Revolution. The article suggests writing for the missing section on Gloria Steinem and the CIA but omits the address. It's Redstockings, PO Box 1284, Stuyvesant Station, New York 10009, NYC.

Rosalyn Baxandall